

Delaware State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2022



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	02
SRC and DVR Missions.....	03
2022 SRC Council Members List	03
SRC and DVR: Working Together for Employment.....	04
SRC Chair and Vice Chair: Letter to Governor Carney.....	05
Employment First Oversight Commission Update	06
2022 Participant Satisfaction Survey Results.....	08
SRC Goals & Priorities.....	11
Feature: Business Relations in Delaware	13
Feature: Transition Services in Delaware	15
2022 Annual Workplace Inclusion Recognition Awards.....	17
Employer Awardees	18
2022 DVR Performance Report	19
DVR Office Locations.....	20

Our Missions

The State Rehabilitation Council

The State Rehabilitation Council is a consumer-driven organization of members representing DVR Stakeholders. Members are appointed by the Governor and provide recommendations and support to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.



The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides individualized services to employers and people with disabilities, developing career pathways that link qualified employees to jobs, resulting in greater independence and a more inclusive workplace.



2022 SRC Council Members

- Christina Andrews
- Emmy Backer*
- Marissa Band
- Nicole Barr*
- Ellen Coulston
- Karen DiNardo
- Laura Greene
- Elisha Jenkins*
- Emmanuel Jenkins
- Natalie Klaus-Rogers
- Dale Matusevich
- Kenyetta McCurdy-Byrd
- Jackie Poquette
- Loretta Sarro
- Despina Wilson
- Alexia Wolf

Individuals with an asterisk * are non-voting members and DVR staff.

Photo credits from cover:

1. Buildings at Rodney Square at night, in Wilmington, Delaware
2. The Delaware State Capitol Building in Dover, Delaware
3. Horseshoe Crab Sunrise
4. View of Downtown Lewes Delaware from bridge with canal
 - a. Photo credit 1 & 2: jonbilous via Adobe Stock | <https://tinyurl.com/jonbilous>
 - b. Photo credit 3: Marc Kirby via Adobe Stock | <https://tinyurl.com/MarcKirby>
 - c. Photo credit 4: DanaDaglePhotography via Adobe Stock | <https://tinyurl.com/DanaDaglePhotography>

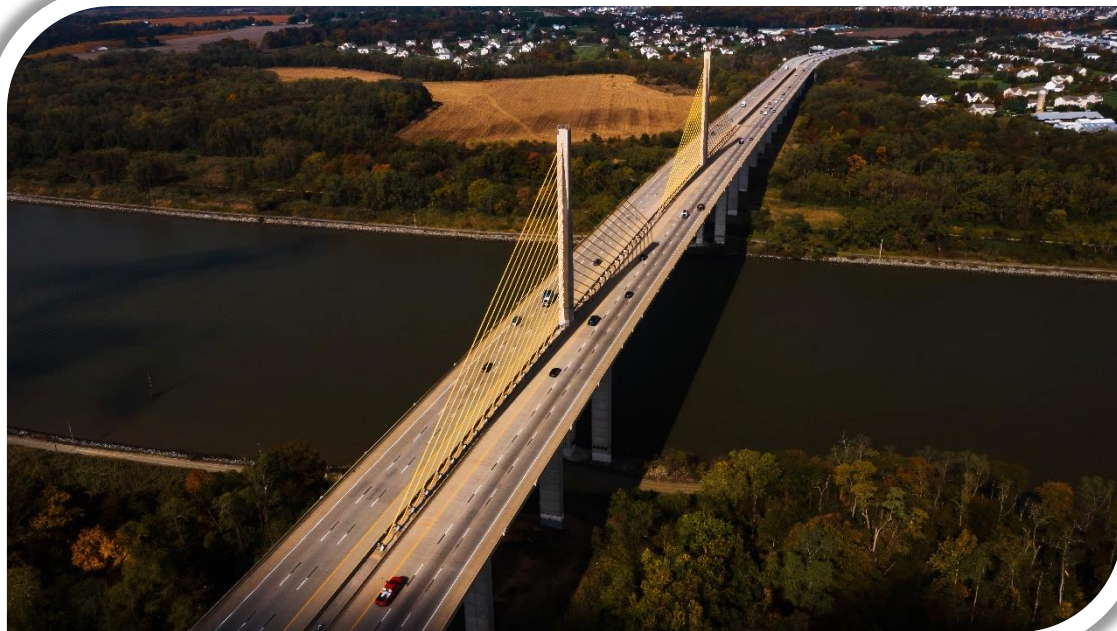
SRC and DVR: Working Together for Employment

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) share a vision:

Assisting individuals with disabilities to develop their skills and abilities and find successful employment in Delaware.

The SRC plays an essential role with the DVR in administering the public vocational rehabilitation program by evaluating the division's effectiveness in providing these services to Delawareans with disabilities. As partners, the SRC and DVR:

- Identify, develop, review, and implement goals and priorities.
- Review DVR participant satisfaction survey results and provide feedback.
- Conduct periodic assessments to determine the needs of individuals with disabilities in Delaware.
- Provide direct input for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan specifically addressing best practices, innovation, and responsiveness to industry occupations.



William V Roth Jr. Bridge, St. Georges, Delaware

Photo by: Sherman Cahal - <https://tinyurl.com/ShermanCahal>



**State Rehabilitation Council of Delaware
for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

December 22, 022

The Honorable John Carney
Governor of Delaware
Dover Office, Tatnall Building
William Penn Street, 2nd Floor
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Governor Carney:

Enclosed for your review is the 2022 Annual Report of the Delaware State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). During FY22, the Council Chair position was held by Karen DiNardo and the Vice Chair position was held by Emanuel Jenkins. The SRC's 2022 objective was to continue the development of DVR's goals and priorities in collaboration with the agency.

During FY22, the pandemic waxed and waned throughout the State and the Council continued to operate in a virtual mode for most of the year. The SRC maintained its regular meeting schedule and held our Annual Workplace Inclusion Recognition Awards. As with each year, awards are presented to successfully employed Vocational Rehabilitation participants as well as businesses that support a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace for their staff.

As you'll see in the report, the overall number of participants served was slightly reduced, however, DVR continued to provide career counseling, training opportunities, and job placement services that resulted in 744 successful employment outcomes, a 6% increase from 2021.

The SRC began in-person meetings again towards the end of the year while retaining the ability for stakeholders to attend virtually or via telephone if they'd prefer. The Council's plan for 2023 is to meet in a hybrid platform, recommit to our roles and responsibilities, renew sub-committees, and enhance recruitment efforts to increase the membership of the State Rehabilitation Council.

The SRC delightedly welcomed the new DVR Director, Elisha Jenkins, to the council in August. We greatly appreciate her assistance and input as the Council continues to learn and grow. We thank our partner, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, for helping the SRC through this transitional time and thank the members of the Council for their time, dedication, efforts, and passion.

In conclusion, we remain committed to the goal of employment for all individuals with disabilities who want to go to work. We intend to broaden our membership, partner with other Boards and Councils, and enthusiastically advocate for individuals with disabilities. It is clear to the SRC that the staff of the DVR are committed to their participant's employment goals and continue to strive to provide consistent and meaningful services to Delawareans with disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to give back to our community through service on the State Rehabilitation Council.

With Warm Regards,
Karen DiNardo
Karen DiNardo, Chair
State Rehabilitation Council

Emmanuel Jenkins
Emmanuel Jenkins, Vice Chair
State Rehabilitation Council

Employment First Oversight Commission Update

HB 122 is named the Jamie Wolfe Employment Act, after the fierce, well-known disabilities advocate, Jamie Wolfe. Wolfe passed away in 2018 after fighting for years for this legislation. She fought for other issues of equality for people with disabilities as well.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With a goal toward competitive integrated employment (CIE) for all — including individuals with disabilities — the Delaware General Assembly enacted HB 122, the Jamie Wolfe Employment Act on June 29, 2021. HB 122 mandated the phased elimination of subminimum wage employment by January 2024. The legislation anticipated the need for careful planning and charged the Delaware Employment 1st Oversight Commission (EFOC) with the development and implementation of a plan to phase out subminimum employment in the State. The legislation outlined components to address the resource and funding requirements and to ensure all individuals with disabilities, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability, could become employed in CIE. The scope of the plan was to be broad, focusing on people currently in or just phased out of 14c employment, but also on promoting opportunities for competitive employment for young adults as they transition from school, and adults who have not yet moved from other services into employment.

As per Delaware HB 122 Legislation, the EFOC worked in partnership with relevant state agencies: the State Council for Persons with Disabilities, the Division of Industrial Affairs, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI), the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS), the Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC), the Department of Education (DOE), family members and individuals currently being served by sheltered workshops, current sheltered workshop providers, and the Disabilities Law Program (DLP) of the Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (CLASI).

Following passage of HB 122, the Jamie Wolfe Employment Act, the EFOC, as directed, established the Employment First Task Force (EFTF) charged with facilitating the development of an Implementation Plan. The key priorities contained within this Competitive Integrated Employment for People with Disabilities *Implementation Plan for HB 122, the Jamie Wolfe Employment Act* (Section II) and as identified by both the EFOC and EFTF, are as follows:

1. Expand the pool of employers participating in supported employment programs:
 - a. Review DVR rates, including additional funding for job development, increased placement milestones, and/or increasing the job coaching rate.
 - b. Funding for capacity building/training and technical assistance for system providers.
2. Invest in strengthening and diversifying the provider network delivering employment support services:
 - a. Track and analyze employment outcomes and services data received for people who were employed using subminimum wages by Chimes and Elwyn.
 - b. Fund DDDS Supported Employment service at levels that cover provider costs and consider the additional support needs of those with more significant disabilities who desire to work.
 - c. Assure robust job exploration, discovery, and customized employment for individuals desiring to work.
 - d. Funding for capacity building/training and technical assistance for system providers.
 - e. Provide quick response within the provider community to the support needs of people previously supported by Elwyn DE through their sheltered employment and day habilitation programs.

3. Ensure cross-agency collaboration and support to maximize system capacity and employment outcomes.
 - a. Revise DOE, DDDS and DVR memorandum of understanding, and establish data to be tracked by each agency.
 - b. Convene a work group to identify collaborations overlap and create partnerships to work together to support individuals to obtain CIE.
4. Focus on employment opportunities at an earlier age, incorporating employment into goal setting as early as possible in the transition process:
 - a. Convene a work group to identify collaboration overlap and create partnerships to work together to support individuals to obtain CIE.
 - b. Provide more opportunities for collaboration between teachers and transition staff (DOE), DVR, DVI, and DDDS preparing transitioning youth/families.
 - c. Annual or bi-annual review DVR rates, including adding more funding for job development, increased placement milestones, and/or increasing the job coaching rate.
 - d. Where appropriate, expand educational opportunities for families with a focus on understanding the adult service system and the work incentives, and other financial tools such as ABLE act accounts, that allow continuation of government benefits.

Both the SRC and DVR are committed partners in the implementation of the findings and recommendations in accordance with HB 122, the Jamie Wolfe Employment Act.



**Ancient House and Architecture. Gilded Age of American History.
Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware**

Photo by: Elena Milovzorova - <https://tinyurl.com/Elena-Milovzorova>

Participant Satisfaction Survey Results

In 2022, the participant satisfaction survey was sent to individuals who exited the vocational rehabilitation program after receiving a service. Surveys were returned by individuals who were employed at exit as well as those who were not employed at exit.

The geographic distribution among respondents is Wilmington (21.28%), Newark (38.30%), Dover (21.28%), and Georgetown (19.14%).

How would you rate your overall satisfaction with DVR?

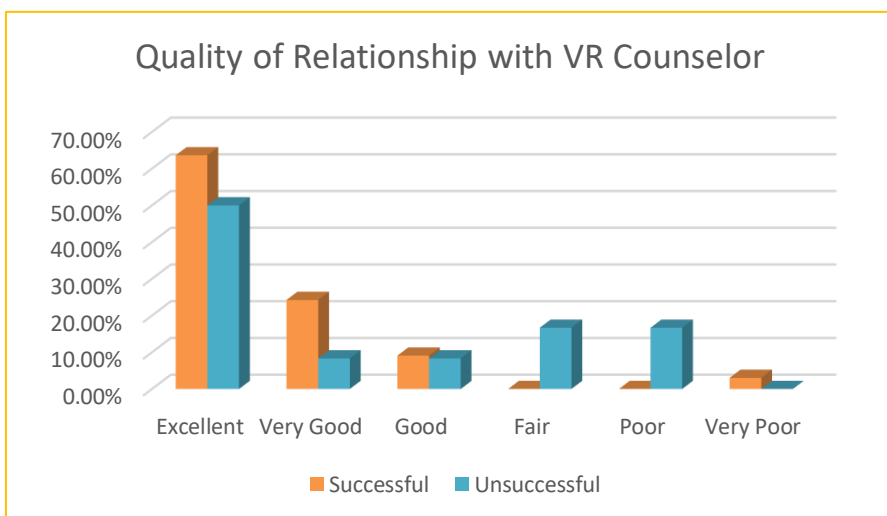
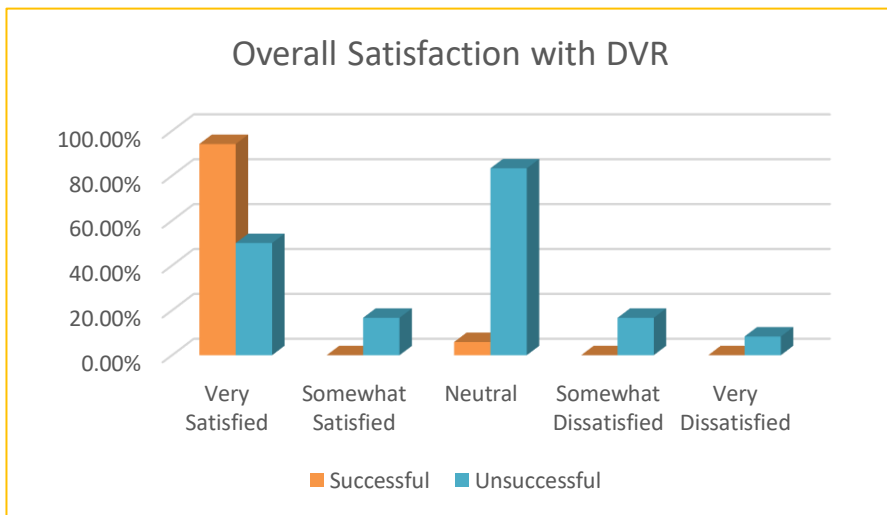
The Overall Satisfaction rating was greater among individuals who were employed at closure with **94.12%** indicating that they were very or somewhat satisfied and **0%** indicating that they were somewhat or very dissatisfied.

Among those not employed at closure, **66.67%** indicated that they were very or somewhat satisfied while **25%** indicated that they were somewhat or very dissatisfied.

5.88% of employed individuals and **8.33%** of unemployed individuals were neutral.

How would you describe the quality of your relationship with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor?

Among individuals who exited with employment, **87.88%** indicated that their relationship with their VR counselor was either excellent or very good, **9.09%** indicated good or fair relationships, and **3.03%** indicated either poor or very poor relationships. Those who exited without employment, **58.33%** indicated either excellent or very good relationships with counselor, **25%** indicated good or fair relationships, and **0%** indicated poor or very poor relationships.



Participant Satisfaction Survey Results Continued

How satisfied were you with the opportunity to choose your vocational rehabilitation goal and services?

A core tenant of the Vocational Rehabilitation program is allowing participants to make informed choices about the employment goals they set and services that they receive.

The survey asked participants to rate their satisfaction with their perceived ability to choose goals and services.

Among individuals who were employed at closure, **100%** were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied compared to **66.66%** among those who were not employed at closure. Among employed participants, **0%** were either somewhat or very dissatisfied while that number was **16.66%** among not employed participants.

Among employed participants, **0%** were neutral while **16.67%** of the individuals who were not employed were neutral.

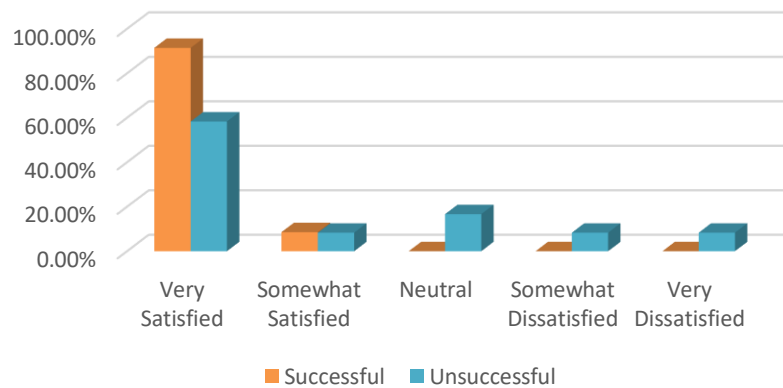
How likely would you be to come back to DVR if you need additional employment services?

Survey participants were asked about their likelihood of returning to DVR if they needed additional employment services in the future.

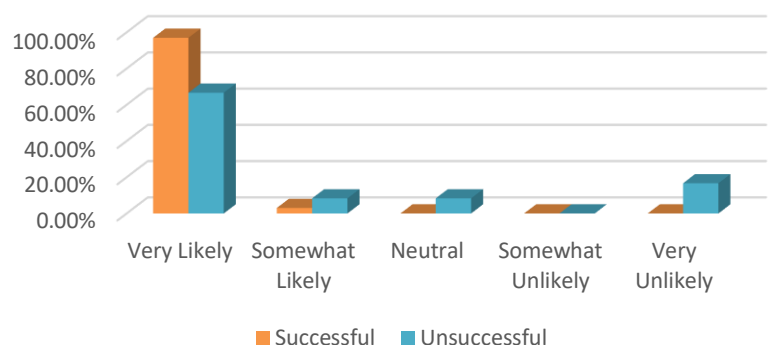
Among those who exited with employment, **100%** said that they were very or somewhat likely to return, **0%** were neutral, and **0%** were somewhat or very unlikely.

Among those who exited without employment, **75%** said that they were very or somewhat likely to return, **8.33%** were neutral, and **16.67%** said that they were somewhat or very unlikely to return.

Satisfaction of Opportunity to Choose Vocational Goal & Services



Return to DVR if Additional Assistance Needed



Participant Satisfaction Survey Results Continued

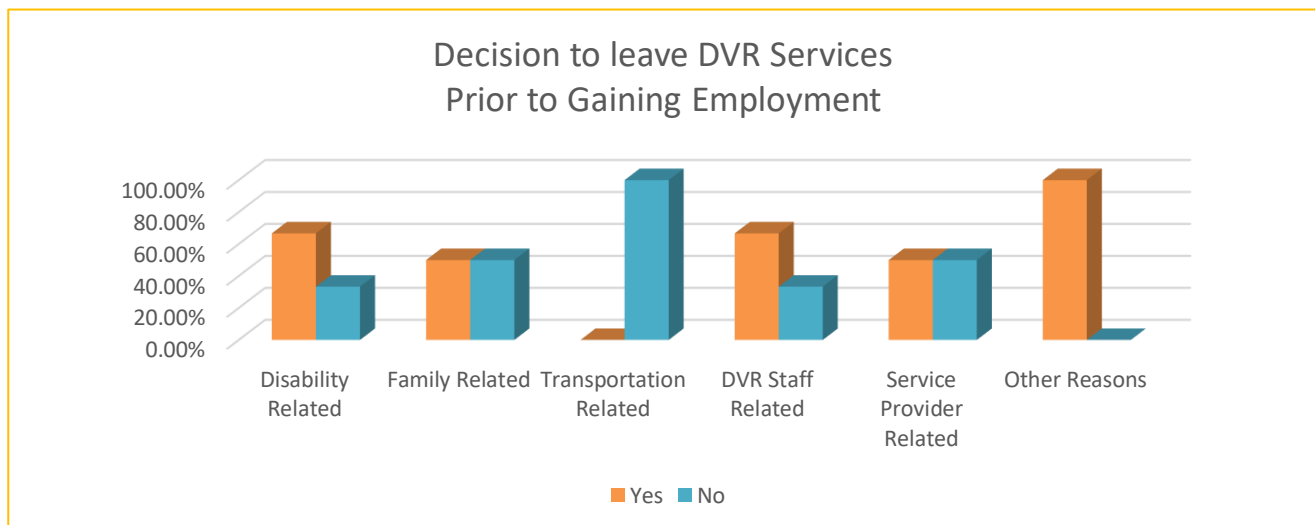
The surveys sent to those who exited with employment and to those who exited without employment differed by one question.

Individuals who were employed at closure were asked about their level of job satisfaction.

96.88% indicated that they were very or somewhat satisfied with their employment while **3.13%** were neutral and **0%** were either somewhat or very dissatisfied.



Individuals who exited DVR services prior to obtaining employment were asked to identify reasons for leaving. **They were able to identify multiple reasons.** The following are the responses: Disability-related (**66.67%**), Transportation-related (**0%**), Vendor/service provider-related (**50%**), Family-related (**50%**), DVR staff-related (**66.67%**), and other (**100%**).



State Rehabilitation Council Goals & Priorities

During the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Retreat which took place on February 14, 2022, the goals and priorities which the SRC sets for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) were discussed. Members of the DVR staff presented information regarding the agency's work related to each goal.

GOAL 1: Provide quality employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

- Build Relationships with Business
- Employment Outcomes for Participants with Significant Barriers to Employment
- Services support Financial Independence
- Access to Services is Non-Discriminatory

DVR's Business Relations Team outreach to new and upcoming businesses and maintain relationships with many employers they continue to work with year to year. Also, there is a strong partnership between Business Relations Specialists (BRS) and DVR's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC), working alongside one another to ensure participants' success with their employment goals. The Business Relations Team also works with team at the Department of Labor's (DOL) Career One-Stop Job Centers throughout the state.

The Business Relations Specialists (BRS) establish and maintain exceptional communication with businesses statewide, keeping up to date on the positions each employer is seeking to fill, along with the specific skills and abilities they're looking for in their applicants. This enables the BRS' to link DVR participants with jobs that fit their skills, abilities, and interests while ensuring the employers have access to a talented pool of candidates for their job openings.

While some participants may have significant barriers affecting their ability to work, their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and Business Relations Team work closely with them and their potential employer to discuss appropriate workplace accommodations that will enhance the applicant's ability to perform the functions of the position.

The services DVR provides are consumer driven. A participant discusses their employment goals with their VR Counselors and together decide which VR services will best assist the participant with meeting their goals. Participants who receive government benefits such as SSI or SSDI have the option to meet with a Benefits Specialist to learn about how their benefits may be affected when they go to work and what options they have moving forward. As wages are based on the labor market, VR Counselors and Business Relations Specialists keep up with job trends in order to ensure their participants will have informed choice when selecting their employment goal and the VR services they require to be successful in their employment.

GOAL 2: Support training programs that reflect opportunities in the labor market.

- Assist consumers to focus on their Career Pathways
- Appropriate Training Opportunities leading to Business-Recognized Credentials
- Coordination with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Partners
- Measurable Skill Gains
- Collaboration with Community Rehabilitation Providers

During 2022, DVR has steadily provided training opportunities with the intent of participants earning industry credentials, leading to broader skillsets, enabling them to choose from a broader pool of jobs that match their needs, knowledge, skills, and abilities.

- Employment Readiness Program
- Competitive Integrated Employment Program (Placement)
- Supported Employment Program
- Job Skills Training Program
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)



Statement from a SRC Member: “Having done multiple career placement intakes/consults at VRs in 3 separate states (Central Ohio, Southern Ohio, Georgia) the Delaware DVR’s evaluation of my career skills was by far the most thorough. My counselor and I not only explored what skills I possessed, but what my interests were and how they aligned. This was a first. I was not just evaluated based on what I was capable of doing. I completed evaluations regarding what I liked to do, what type of working environment I excelled, etc. My counselor and I discussed how the skills I possess aligned with my interests and the potential skills I needed to improve/develop. I felt like I was being prepared for success and vocational fulfillment as opposed to being tested for what I could do and where I could be placed.”

GOAL 3: Expand opportunities for students to transition from school to work.

- Quality of Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Quality of Transition Services
- Coordination with Partners (e.g. DOE & Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS))

There are many facets of a comprehensive system of transition services to students with disabilities. WIOA provides the opportunity to increase knowledge of transition through Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). The landscape of transition services has shifted greatly since the introduction of WIOA. This legislation proactively positions VR to work more collaboratively with LEAs assisting in their transition work with students. It also allows for access to VR potential clients earlier. DVR and DOE continue to host monthly (10 months) Transition Cadre meetings where all stakeholder groups are welcomed and represented including transition coordinators, families, DVR District Administrators, DDDS, disability advocacy organizations, etc.

In the Department of Education’s IEP Plus program, a “must respond” field was added to the IEP template. This will promote the sharing of information about Pre-ETS with students and their families. This field galvanizes conversation with students with disabilities and their families that employment is expected, possible and the end goal of education. DVR’s in-house Pre-Employment Transition Counselors focus on younger students and assist them in learning about and selecting Career Technical Education pathways.

Presently, Kent and Sussex counties has a higher number of students involved Pre-ETS vs. New Castle County (NCC). Pre-ETS staff are working to increase NCC students’ involvement in the program. Delaware DVR currently has 11 Transition Counselors and 4 Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinators, covering Delaware public high schools.

Business Relations in Delaware

The Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has enhanced connections to workforce information, resources, and other advantages for serving individuals with disabilities. Career exploration, employer engagement, and assisting job seekers go to work are at the forefront of DVR's strategic goals. To assist in this area, DVR has an in-house Business Relations Unit which consists of one Statewide Business Relations Manager, five full-time merit and one contracted Business Relations Specialists, all of whom have post-secondary degrees with concentrations in areas such as marketing, communications, or human resource management. Unit team members consistently receive training in areas required to bring proficiency to the job.

The Business Relations Unit currently functions from a dual-customer perspective of working with job seekers with disabilities and businesses, and exists to:

- Identify and prepare DVR job seekers in a timely manner in response to employer recruiting needs.
- Build solid relationships and engage business and industry in collaborative activities as a resource to meet their workforce needs.
- Assist the DVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to obtain meaningful opportunities for all assigned job seekers who want to gain successful employment

During FY'22 DVR assisted 740 job seekers with disabilities to obtain/maintain employment. This resulted in our in-house Business Relations Specialists and contractual Placement Specialists working with approximately 590 Delaware businesses to help fill their specific workforce needs.

The Business Relations Team is a partner with the State of Delaware Department of Human Resources Talent Acquisition Team and the Division of the Visually Impaired to support the State of Delaware Employment Network. The State of Delaware's Employment Network (EN), a Work Experience Development Program, was created to provide work experience opportunities for people with disabilities to gain useful, employment-based knowledge and experience within varied state government career paths. This period there were seven individuals placed and 8 engaged in the placement process. The Employment Network Partner Team is focusing on targeted outreach and marketing which is key to the program's success.

The following are several participant success stories from the past year:

- 1) JM was a participant in the Georgetown DVR office and chose the Career Pathway of Education Paraprofessional, working with a Business Relations Specialist. JM was seeking employment with a local School District and worked as a Substitute Education Paraprofessional during this process. Although he had several interviews with the district, he never received a permanent offer. The Business Relations Specialist encouraged JM to increase his employment search to other school districts and was hired in a temporary position with another School District for the 2021-2022 school year. JM continued his search for permanent employment as he increased his skills and experience. JM was successful in his search and received three permanent employment offers as an Education Paraprofessional. JM sent the following text message to the Business Relations Specialist:

"I just wanted to let you know I was hired as a permanent paraprofessional in the Fall. Thank you for all your help in my employment search and the amazing resume you created for me. You are an asset to DVR."
- 2) MN is a participant in the Wilmington office and worked with a Business Relations Specialist for job placement services. The Business Relations Specialist assisted the participant with resume development, interview skills preparation, attending job fairs, conducting job search, and job development with company

Recruiters. Through these efforts MN began employment as a Warehouse Associate at a local furniture Distribution Center in Newark.

- 3) A Business Relations Specialist in New Castle County provided job placement services to JO, a participant of the Newark office. Services included developing JO's resume and arranging/transporting the participant to an informational interview. JO determined that she was interested in a career pathway with a n express transportation company. JO and the Business Relations Specialist completed an online application and conducted mock interviews to prepare participant for her working interview. JO passed her working interview with flying colors and received a job offer for the position of Package Handler! The Business Relations Specialist is providing employment follow-up services. JO's Manager stated that JO is doing an excellent job and has been a welcomed addition to their team.
- 4) JS is a participant being served in the Georgetown office. His lifelong dream has been to work for the United States Postal Service and with the support of DVR that dream came to fruition in May! Business Relations Specialists assisted JS to navigate the application process and prepare him for his interview, the tests, and training academy. JS successfully completed the training academy in Philadelphia and began employment as a City Carrier Assistant in Sussex County. JS shared his gratitude to the Business Relations Specialists and his VR Counselor for all of the support he received to achieve his dream career pathway!

To connect with businesses and organizations across Delaware, the Business Relations Unit are active members of Delaware Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) and Delmarva SHRM, as well as several Chambers of Commerce, including New Castle County Chamber of Commerce, Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce, Middletown Area Chamber of Commerce, Milford Chamber of Commerce, Rehoboth Beach – Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce and Western Sussex Chamber of Commerce. Throughout the State the Business Relations Unit participates in a variety of community partner meetings.

Transition Services in Delaware

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed on July 22, 2014, reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and amending the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and now requires Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies to set aside a minimum of 15% of their federal funds to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to Students with Disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services.

An early start at job exploration for students with disabilities ensures meaningful opportunities to achieve successful employment outcomes, including:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences during or after school, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships) provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive training or postsecondary education programs at Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)
- Workplace Readiness Training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring

These services are for eligible students enrolled in school, aged between 14 and 22 years old who have a disability, and are potentially eligible for DVR services, as well as consumers referred by DVR and/or community partners.

DVR continues to employ internal Pre-Employment Career Counselors to work directly with the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and students throughout the state. Pre-ETS Career Coordinators meet with the LEAs to identify the needs of their students in regard to gaps in their career preparation services. Together they develop a plan to distribute the core Pre-ETS services that are most needed.

DVR's Pre-Employment Career Counselors work with students beginning at age 14 to assist them with developing a foundation of skills related to career interests and exploration, self-advocacy, and disability awareness. However, each school has different resources; DVR remains flexible to meet the needs of the students. The collaboration among DVR, Department of Education, (DOE), LEAs, Pre-ETS Career Coordinators, and providers has been exceptional, with all involved seeing the value of connecting students to opportunities.

Through joint collaboration with DOE and DVR, Pre-ETS have been built into the student Individualized Education Program (IEP) to assess for participation in programs and services available. DVR continues to monitor and evaluate the programs and services provided by the Pre-ETS Career Coordinators and Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs), both formally and informally. On-site monitoring, observations, feedback from schools, students, and families, and using pre/post tests are all strategies used to evaluate the Pre-ETS services. LEAs incorporate the work completed in Pre-ETS in the students' IEP and data considerations. Additionally, this information gives students a better understanding of their strengths, barriers, disability, and accommodation needs and helps to develop and utilize their self-advocacy skills to the best of their ability.

Project SEARCH (PS) is another example of a strong collaboration with DVR, DOE, LEAs, businesses, and Community Rehabilitation Providers. The program continues to serve students in 4 different businesses and all three counties during the school year including Christiana Care Health Services (CCHS) in New Castle County, BayHealth Hospital and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) in Kent County, and Tidal Health Hospital in Sussex County.

Each site has a host school district providing the instructor and classroom support, however, students from any district are encouraged to apply and have the ability to use the school choice process in order to participate through the host district. Delaware has been nationally recognized for the high rate of successful employment among the graduates of all four Project SEARCH sites. The programs consistently achieve 80%-100% placement rates with each cohort of students.

Project Search Steering Committees exist for all Project SEARCH programs in Delaware and are comprised of representatives from each of the partner organizations: the host business, DVR, DOE, LEAs, and provider agencies. Although each program operates slightly differently, the committee meetings are held regularly, generally monthly, but no less than quarterly. The purpose of the committees is to monitor and evaluate the program based on adherence to the Memorandum of Understanding and program fidelity.

The committee reviews roles and responsibilities, processes and procedures, and the timeline of events to evaluate program effectiveness and efficiency. With all partners at the table on a regular basis, there is continuous program evaluation. When situations arise in which a change is required, the partners discuss options, the impact the change may have on the program, and considerations for each individual partner. The Committee will consult with the PS on-site team to receive feedback and communicate changes for program implementation.

The PS on-site team consists of the instructor, paraprofessional(s), skills trainers, and the VR Counselor. This team meets weekly to review operational needs, plan coverage, identify and address concerns, and facilitate communication and collaboration. A member of the Steering Committee meets with the PS on-site team at least monthly in order to maintain communication, evaluate the daily operations, and assist with identifying and resolving programmatic barriers. Over the past year DVR and DOE coordinated monthly Technical Assistance from the National Sponsors to keep our teams up to date on best practices. Notably, this year, a representative from the National team visited Delaware and had the opportunity to meet with local teams.

The Delaware PIPEline Project is yet another example of the ongoing work to support students in transition to meet their employment goals. The PIPEline Project is a collaboration of Delaware state agencies and national organizations that serve Students with Disabilities (SWD) to increase positive educational and employment outcomes for SWD. The National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity's (NAPE) Program Improvement Process for Equity™ (PIPE) has been successfully implemented with school districts across the country to close gender gaps in Career Technical Education (CTE) career pathways leading to non-traditional career fields. This proven change process has been modified to examine the gaps for SWD in completing their CTE career pathways. PIPEline engages teams of educators, community members, and other stakeholders to: use data to conduct a performance and participation gap analysis; learn about the research literature on root causes for these gaps; conduct action research to identify the root causes in play at their institution; select and implement an aligned intervention that directly addresses the identified root causes; and evaluate their success. The Delaware PIPEline Project has successfully engaged nine school districts over the past four years and DVR will continue to support the ongoing work to ensure that SWD are supported with the resources needed to increase the rate of entrance and completion in CTE career pathways.

The Delaware Transition Leadership team also continues to hold the monthly Cadre meetings to enhance the quality of transition related services. The monthly Cadre continues to meet on the 3rd Thursday of each month during the academic school year to provide technical assistance and professional learning to all transition stakeholders. DOE, DVR, DDDS and DVI partner to co-facilitate these meetings to ensure agency representation is built into LEA professional development. Cadre has continued to be an excellent venue to highlight best practices and align systems in order to enhance opportunities for student success.

Annual Workplace Inclusion Recognition Awards

The State Rehabilitation Council hosted the Annual Workplace Inclusion Recognition Awards event on Monday, October 10, 2022, at 1:00 pm via the Zoom platform. Approximately 100 individuals attended, including DVR Staff, SRC members, Employee awardees and members of their families, representatives from the Employer awardees and their colleagues, and a host of additional attendees from the community.



The SRC hosts this event each year in collaboration with the DVR to recognize individuals with disabilities who've overcome barriers to go to work and have contributed to the diversity and inclusion of Delaware's workforce, as well as employers that support and promote a diverse and inclusive workplace.

The Council was fortunate to host two Keynote Speakers, Benjamin Schrader and Emmanuel Jenkins, who each discussed their paths to employment as individuals who have disabilities.

Benjamin is a Disability Activist and the Director of the fledgling self-advocacy group, Redefining Independence and Social Empowerment, known as RISE. He also Chairs the State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD).

Emmanuel Jenkins, founder of the non-profit organization, We Stand for Something, also works for the State of Delaware with the Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) as its Community Relations Officer. He was the Vice Chair of the SRC during 2022, and recently became the Chair.

The State Rehabilitation Council members received many nominations which made it difficult to select awardees. They extend their sincerest congratulations to all of the 2022 nominees!

DVR Deputy Director, Cynthia Fairwell, facilitated the presentation of the recognition awards which were presented to the following Outstanding Employees and Outstanding Businesses:

Outstanding Employees

- J. Santiago
- A. Hall
- D. Smith
- L. Rogers-Walker

Outstanding Businesses

- Shoprite
- Delaware Tech, Terry Campus
- Funland

Workplace Inclusion Employer Awardees

Shoprite Supermarket

The Shoprite Grocery store has received numerous Grocer Retailer of the Year Awards as being one of the best places to work in the area. Shoprite is committed to a diverse workforce and offers a barrier-free employment process as well. Managers are supportive of their employees, especially those with disabilities, and they go out of their way to provide accommodations, including adjusted work schedules. They offer interpreting services for their employees who are deaf, and have special ergonomic chairs for individuals with back and neck issues.

Shoprite requires all employees to attend a yearly certification in disability and diversity awareness. They pair new employees with a senior associate in their assigned department. Senior associates work in tandem with the new associates and progress at the speed of the new associate because they recognize that everyone learns at a different pace.

The HR manager and his staff contact the DVR Business Relations Specialists when a job position opens in their store. Shoprite strongly believes in the benefits of employing people with disabilities such as deaf, hard of hearing, and many others. They have employed DVR participants in various customer service, food service, stocking, and management positions within their company. There have been many successful examples of employees with disabilities that have advanced within the company and have attained very successful careers.

Delaware Tech, Terry Campus

The Director of Human Resources, Marybeth Roach is very open to a diverse and inclusive workforce. She contacts DVR to inform of open recruitments at the Terry campus. DVR Business Relations Specialists assists her with this process by identifying the best candidate for the position and coordinating the application and interview process.

This past summer, a participant held an internship in the IT department to gain valuable work experience and learn social skills in a professional environment. He loved the experience and felt more confident upon completion.

Funland

Funland (Seaside Amusements) in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware is a family-owned business embracing inclusion and diversity, work based learning opportunities and supporting the community in various ways.

Over time Funland has supported the community and working with people with disabilities. Funland hosts fundraisers for Autism Delaware and is now working with the Sussex Consortium (Cape Henlopen School District) allowing the kids from the Consortium to work in the park to gain employment skills. Funland has hired some of the students (ages 14 and up) from the Consortium and partnered with DVR to assist in diversifying their workforce. In the 2022 season, Funland hired six employees with disabilities. Personnel Manager, Chris Darr, has created a welcoming and inclusive working environment in the park. He maintains an atmosphere of acceptance and works to ensure that all employees are seen and treated equally. Hiring employees with disabilities has proven no different. Regardless of an employee's strengths and weaknesses, Chris has always worked with his team to ensure everyone is successful, thinking outside the box when needed to see his employees prosper.

Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Federal Fiscal Year 2022 Performance Report

Successful Rehabilitations:	740		
Most Significant Disabilities	313	(42.12%)	} 92.59%
Significant Disabilities	375	(50.47%)	
Transition Youth Rehabilitated	244		
Total Participants Served:	4,353		
Participants with Most Significant Disabilities	1,954	(44.88%)	} 92.82%
Participants with Significant Disabilities	2,087	(47.94%)	
New Applicants in FY 2022	1,555		
Determined Eligible	1,502		
Acceptance Rate	95%		
New Transition Students	651		
Transition Students/Youth Served	1784		
Average Hourly Wage for FY 2022 closures			
All closures	\$14.84		
Transition	\$13.72		
Supported Employment	\$11.92		
Adults (not TR or SE)	\$15.97		
Individuals in Delayed Status at the end of FY 2022	0		

Vocational Rehabilitation Office Locations



For additional contact information,
please visit our website:
<https://labor.delaware.gov/DVR>

New Castle County

Wilmington

4425 N. Market St.
Wilmington DE 19802
P: 302-761-8275
F: 302-761-6633

Newark

University Office Place
252 Chapman Road 2nd Floor
Newark, DE 19702
P: 302-368-6980
F: 302-368-6988

Middletown

Appoquinimink State Service Ctr.
122 Silver Lake Road
Middletown, DE 19709
P: 302-696-3180
F: 302-696-3181

Kent County

Dover

Blue Hen Corporate Center
655 S. Bay Road, Suite 2H
Dover, DE 19901
P: 302-739-5478
F: 302-739-6874

Sussex County

Georgetown

8 Georgetown Plaza
Suite 2
Georgetown, DE 19947
P: 302-856-5730
F: 302-856-5486